

The Future Landscape of the CIO Position in 2026



In today's IT landscape, many IT leaders prioritise tasks related to security management and enhancing the efficiency of IT operations and system performance over strategic activities such as driving business innovation, identifying opportunities for competitive differentiation, or actively participating in business strategy.

According to CIO.com's 2023 State of the CIO survey, approximately 47% and 40% of tech executives, respectively, reported dedicating significant attention to security management and improving IT operations and systems performance. On the other hand, driving business innovation, identifying competitive advantages, and engaging in business strategy were ranked lower among the top 10 priorities for CIOs in 2023.

According to the survey, CIOs believe their top priority by 2026 will be driving business innovation.

IT leaders anticipate that the future CIO will spend more time working on shaping business strategy, creating revenue-generating products and services, and exerting influence on the organisation's overall roadmap.

Joseph Bruhin, CIO of Breakthru Beverage Group, said "The CIO role in 2026 will be about influencing, leading, and governing, as opposed to technology selector, integrator, configurator, and customizer. And CIOs who are not on top of this before 2026 will find themselves having to catch-up".

As every company becomes digital, CIOs will assume an architect role of the company. They say CIOs need to be even more visionary than they are today as they will take a leading role in shaping the organisation's future and not just support it.

Several large events have pushed the CIO job into new territory. Those events encompass the widespread adoption of cloud computing and software-as-a-service (SaaS), the rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies like ChatGPT, and the increasing utilisation of low-code software development platforms. All these trends have empowered non-IT employees with greater capabilities for technology creation. Consequently, CIOs and their teams have found themselves with more space to focus on responsibilities beyond basic software implementation.

To sustain the effectiveness of deployed technologies, CIOs will need to take on responsibilities such as reinforcing practices like agile product management, which ensures the rapid delivery of value to customers. CIOs will also play a crucial role in ensuring that emerging technologies and sound data management are integrated into business practices. At the same time, they will be responsible for driving the development of digital capabilities across all organisational levels.

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Published on : Thu, 14 Sep 2023